

VZCZCXRO3029
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHPS #0428/01 1521647
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 011647Z JUN 07
FM USOFFICE PRISTINA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7413
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1175
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY
RHFMISS/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR TF FALCON PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUFOANA/USNIC PRISTINA SR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000428

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE, NSC FOR BRAUN, USUN FOR DREW
SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/28/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UNMIK](#) [UNSC](#) [YI](#)
SUBJECT: KOSOVO: POST-INDEPENDENCE SERB-RELATED CHALLENGES
TAKE CLEARER SHAPE

Classified By: COM Tina S. Kaidanow for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

This message has been coordinated with Embassy Belgrade.

11. (C) SUMMARY: The eventual declaration of Kosovo's independence, as we have always anticipated, will pose a number of challenges on the ground given continuing Belgrade and Kosovo Serb refusal to countenance any settlement based on the Ahtisaari plan or to accept the end of Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo. While we still cannot fully anticipate every move that the Serbs may take, the shape of Belgrade and Kosovo Serb reaction to a UNSC resolution and a subsequent Kosovo declaration of independence is becoming clearer with time. Recent statements from Serbian PM Kostunica, intimations from some in his inner circle, and institutional preparations via the formation of a new "Kosovo Ministry" in the Serbian government suggest that Belgrade will proclaim the independence of Kosovo juridically "invalid" and push on with efforts to solidify control over all ethnic Serb-majority areas of Kosovo via the consolidation of parallel institutions, as well as funding to Serb communities, under the new Ministry.

12. (C) Summary, cont. De jure "partition" per se -- a dirty word within the Kosovo Serb community, especially in the south -- will not be the objective, but rather the establishment of Belgrade's administrative and political sway over a new quasi-entity of "Kosovo and Metohija" as a residual part of Serbia, with little if any reference to Kosovo governing institutions. Indeed, that process of consolidating Serbian authority over Serb-majority parts of Kosovo will continue regardless of the outcome of the current UN Security Council debate. With little leverage over Belgrade and no way to substitute for Serbian financial subsidies in the short term, we will be unable to affect this process significantly, and will instead have to focus on long-term efforts to win over Kosovo Serb communities through incentives and carefully crafted assistance. The more serious wild card in the immediate aftermath of an independence declaration, and the real threat posed to stability, will be the actions of northern Kosovo Serb hardliners, who are not fully controlled by Belgrade and who

may choose to provoke violence or inhibit freedom of movement as an act of vengeance or a show of power. KFOR and UNMIK proclaim themselves prepared to deal with most contingencies, but the international community will need to counter robustly any intimation by Belgrade or the Kosovo Serb leadership that Serb areas of Kosovo are somehow being separated from the Kosovo body politic, or we will face the prospect of Albanian anger and retaliation. End summary.

Belgrade Shows Its Hand

13. (C) Recent comments by Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica, though defiant in tone, provide good insight into the likeliest course of action by official Belgrade should a UN Security Council resolution on Kosovo pass and Kosovo authorities formally declare independence from Serbia. No matter what the international response, and even if key European players recognize Kosovo's independence, Serbia will assert that its territory cannot be forcibly removed and that, juridically, Kosovo remains subject to Serbian sovereignty. During a recent lunch hosted by Amb. Polt in Belgrade and attended by COM, former Tadic advisor Leon Kojen acknowledged as much, an admission that elicited no surprise given the Serbian government's consistent refusal to countenance any change in Kosovo's status.

14. (C) It is practically a certainty that no effort will be made by Serbia, after a Kosovo independence declaration, to reverse or obstruct the de facto self-governance of the Albanian-majority areas of Kosovo; it would be pointless for Belgrade to get in the way of the establishment of a new Kosovo government post-status or of an international civilian presence led by the EU. Nor will partition of northern Kosovo be the aim; hard partition is both a dirty word in

PRISTINA 00000428 002 OF 003

Kosovo (especially among southern Serbs) and a non-starter for Kostunica since it would imply leaving a huge number of Serbs outside the sphere of Belgrade protection and an abandonment of historical claims to Kosovo. Rather, Belgrade will focus on consolidating its administrative and political hold on Serb-majority areas in Kosovo, both north and south, via mechanisms that already exist -- most notably the Coordination Center of Kosovo (CCK) -- but which have never been fully and authoritatively utilized. All aspects of administering Serb areas of Kosovo will be brought under the authority of the new "Kosovo Ministry," including, notably, coordination of a tough rejectionist line with the Serbian Orthodox church, as well as funding for local Serb communities, which will continue to be non-transparent to Kosovo's government. (Note: Some aspects of Kosovo policy may still be subject to influences from Tadic's DS -- including the foreign policy elements, ensuring a responsible Defense Ministry position, and possibly even coordinating finances for parallel institutions, though the latter will be funneled through the Kosovo Ministry and the CCK.)

15. (C) This kind of consolidated authority will achieve a number of objectives for Belgrade: it will strengthen and solidify the negativist Serb approach to Ahtisaari's plan and its implementation; it will ensure that Kostunica and the DSS can never be accused of selling Kosovo to international interests or violating the Serbian constitution; and it will provide a practical platform for transforming Serbian assertions of continued control over Serb Kosovo into something close to reality. Kostunica and his cohorts probably also hope that by bringing the disparate strands of Kosovo policy under one roof, they can assert greater control over the often unpredictable Kosovo Serb leadership, which in the past has successfully exploited Serbian indifference or the screen of multiple voices emanating from Belgrade to achieve its own hardline ambitions.

16. (C) We will have little leverage to combat this effort in the short-term given the difficulty of engaging with local Serbs, who fear a cutoff of payments and subsidies from their

Belgrade lifeline and who will fear even more direct intimidation from hardline elements of their own community in the days after status. The Government of Serbia may well issue a flat edict in the weeks and months following an independence declaration prohibiting any cooperation with the ICO and obviating any attempt to gain Serb buy-in to the implementation of Ahtisaari's plan. (The GOS could also take other steps designed to undermine Kosovo "statehood," for example by closing the borders to anything originating out of Kosovo or bearing the symbols or documentation of Kosovo.) We are working with the ICO on contingency planning for this kind of obstructionism, which will require careful behind-the-scenes networking with the few Kosovo Serbs who might be willing to ignore Belgrade's prohibitions, as well as intelligent use of assistance and other forms of international and Kosovar incentives to encourage some form of interaction. Intensified Serb/Serbian obstructionism in the initial months of Kosovo's independence may also require internationals to step in where Kosovo Serb participation was envisaged by the Ahtisaari plan, for example in the formation of interim municipal planning teams which are supposed to prepare for elections and local governance in new, Serb-majority municipalities.

Hardline Kosovo Serb Leadership Remains the Wild Card

17. (C) If Belgrade's attitude towards post-status Kosovo is taking firmer shape, the response of Kosovo Serb hardliners still remains a wild card. We doubt they will get enthusiastic encouragement from Belgrade to take actions that are provocative in the extreme, but -- given the loose and occasionally acrimonious ties between the likes of Mirko Jaksic and PM Kostunica -- all options appear to remain on the table. We know from ad hoc but reliable reporting that Jaksic, his only slightly more urbane alter ego Milan Ivanovic, and their henchmen in the north have considered a

PRISTINA 00000428 003 OF 003

variety of actions to follow any Kosovar declaration, ranging from rhetorical rejection of independence and a corresponding establishment of their own Serb-dominated entity (as a residual part of Serbia) to far more dangerous initiatives including a possible order to all Kosovo Serb members of the Kosovo Police Service to remove their uniforms and don a Serb insignia (septel) -- this despite clear warnings from COM, UNMIK regional representative Gallucci, KFOR, and high-level Western visitors that any such activities would risk conflict with both Albanians and the international community. Restraint has not been a hallmark of the northern leadership, although Serbian authorities have on occasion been able to hold back the worst Kosovo Serb behavior when circumstances appear to warrant and when their objectives coincide.

International Resolve and Public Firmness will be Critical

18. (C) Should the northern Serb hardliners try to obstruct freedom of movement, KFOR is prepared to handle that eventuality; UNMIK police, as well, can handle a variety of provocations, though their abilities would be severely tested in the event of a mass defection of Serb police from the KPS. There are a number of other misdeeds the northern Serbs may also attempt -- for example preventing UNMIK and other internationals from occupying their premises -- and tighter UNMIK-KFOR coordination would help ensure a well-oiled response. What will make the most difference, however, will be the firm and uncompromising attitude of the international community to any moves, rhetorical or otherwise, that seem to separate Serb areas from the rest of Kosovo. To avoid extreme responses on the part of Kosovar Albanian hotheads, and to provide Albanian moderates here the wherewithal to cool down some of their fiery compatriots, the U.S. and its European allies will have to speak out quickly to negate any assertion of continued Serb sovereignty over parts of Kosovo. KFOR's visible presence in the north and throughout Kosovo will also be an essential aspect of our message of reassurance and restraint to the Albanians given the many

perils of the transition period.
KAIDANOW